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USDA PRIME | USDA CHOICE | USDA GOOD | USDA STNDRD | USDA COMRCL

# U.S. GRADES for BEEF

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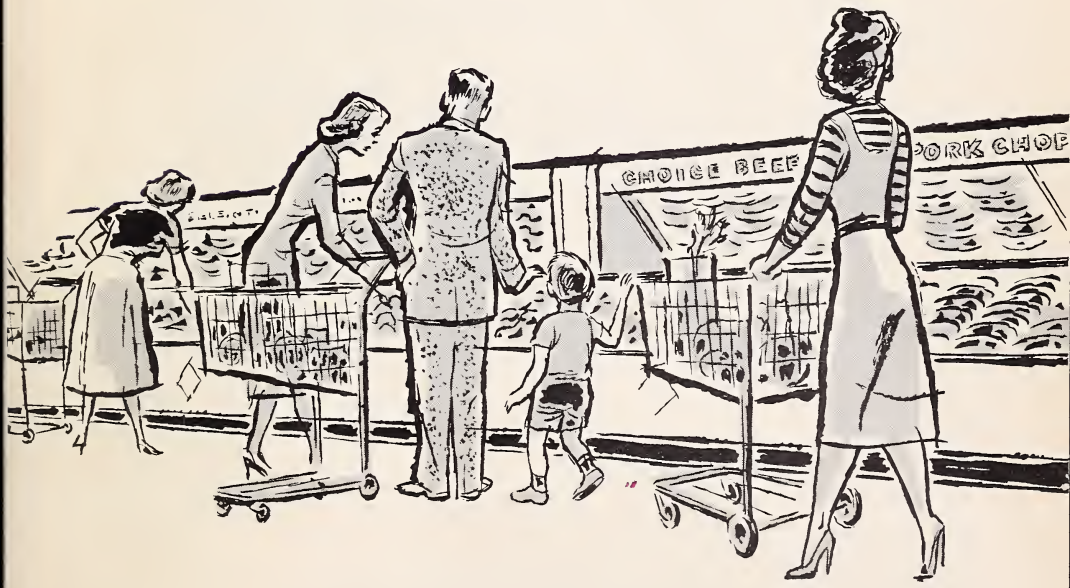



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

MARKETING BULLETIN NO. 15

**To provide consumers with a reliable guide to meat quality, the U.S. Department of Agriculture for many years has made Federal meat grading available on a voluntary basis in all parts of the country.**

**The purpose of this booklet is to give consumers a brief explanation of the U.S. grades for beef—and to show how they can be used as an aid in the purchasing and cooking of beef.**

Livestock Division
Agricultural Marketing Service

November 1960

This bulletin supersedes Leaflet No. 310 of the same title.

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. - Price 10 cents

# U.S. GRADES for BEEF

Success in preparing any meat dish—the concern of all cooks—begins with the selection of a suitable quality and cut of meat.

Each of the U.S. grades for beef is associated with a specific degree of quality which can be used as a guide to the appropriate cooking method.

It is easy to recognize federally graded beef. Almost every cut from a graded carcass will bear one or more of the shield-shaped grade stamps which enclose the letters USDA—meaning U.S. Department of Agriculture—and the name of the grade, such as Prime or Choice.

Do not confuse this shield-shaped grade stamp which identifies quality with the round Federal meat inspection stamp, bearing the legend "U.S. Insp'd & P'S'D," which certifies wholesomeness.

Quality in meat is highly variable and almost impossible to judge in small retail cuts. The Federal meat grader who places the USDA grade stamp on meat is highly-trained and grades only whole carcasses or wholesale cuts. He uses a roller stamp which leaves a ribbon-like imprint of the grade name on practically all the retail cuts. The stamping is done with harmless purple vegetable coloring.

The official grades for beef are discussed and illustrated in the pages which follow. Most retailers will sell only the grade or grades that will satisfy the majority of their customers.

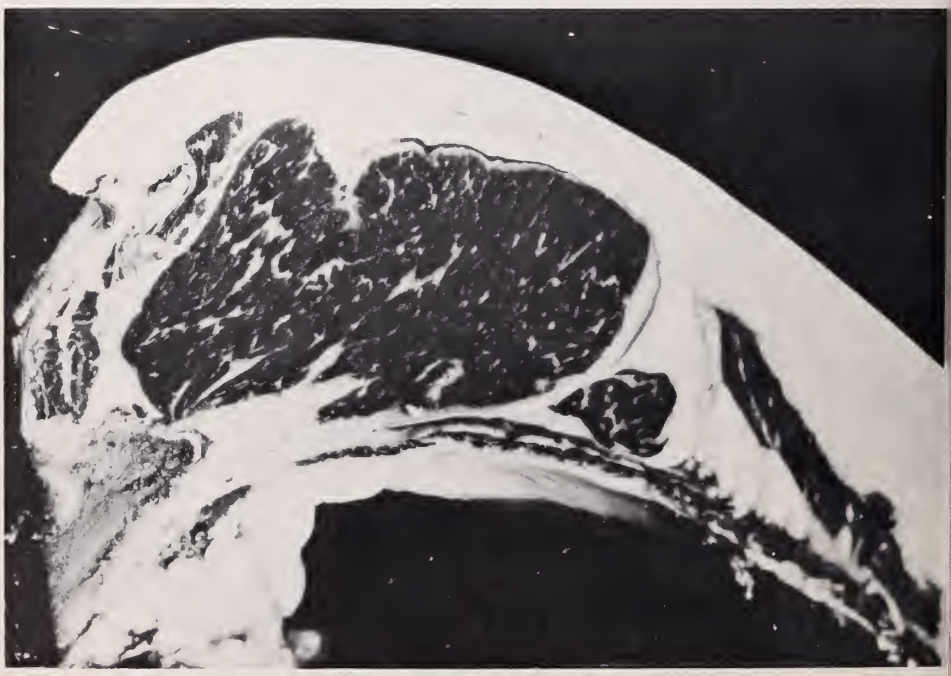
Learn the grade best suited to your needs. Remember, too, that the proper selection of cuts is important. A Good grade T-bone steak, for example, can be more tender than a Choice grade round steak.

USDA PRIME

# PRIME

As the name implies, beef of this grade is highly acceptable and palatable. Prime grade beef is produced from young and well-fed beef-type cattle. The youth of the cattle and the careful intensive feeding which it has had combine to produce very high quality cuts of beef. Such cuts have liberal quantities of fat interspersed within the lean (marbling). These characteristics contribute greatly to the juiciness, tenderness, and flavor of the meat. Rib roasts and loin steaks of this grade are consistently tender and cuts from the round and chuck should also be highly satisfactory.

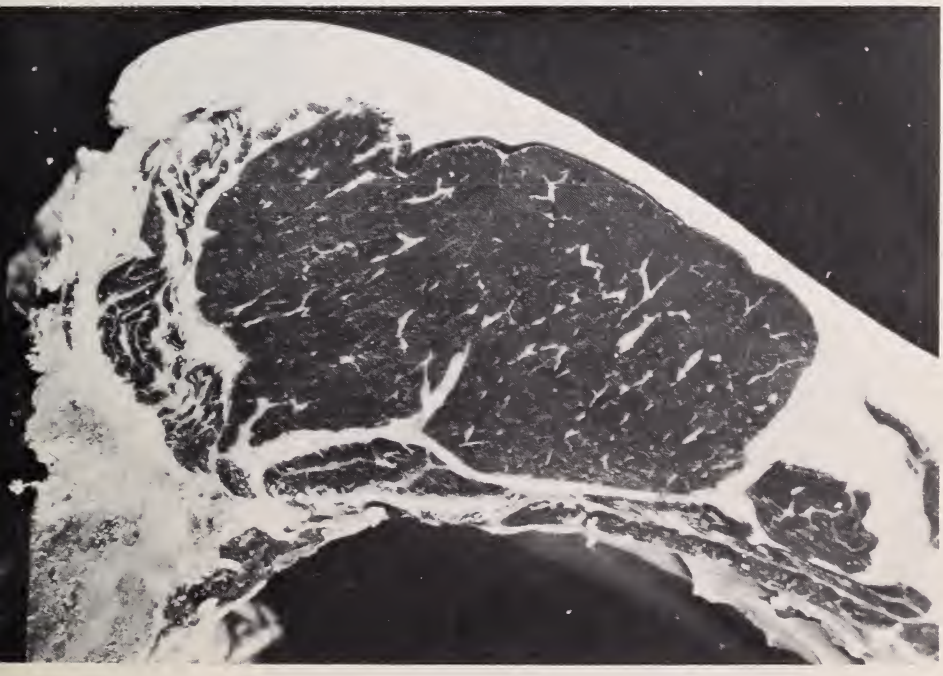
BN-10356X



# CHOICE

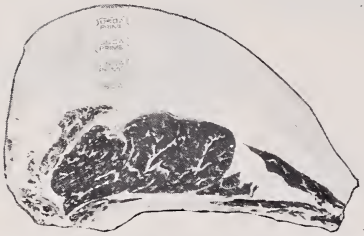
This grade is preferred by most consumers because it is of high quality but usually has less fat than beef of the Prime grade. More of this grade of beef is produced than of any other grade. Choice beef is usually available the year around in substantial quantity. Roasts and steaks from the loin and rib are tender and juicy and other cuts, such as those from the round or chuck, which are suitable for braising or roasting, should be tender with a well-developed flavor.

BN-10354X



# WHAT CU

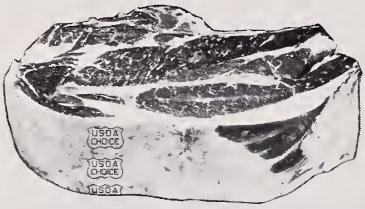
## RIB ROAST



BN-10344X

Unexcelled for tenderness and flavor, rib roast is easily carved and served. Rib roasts should be at least two ribs thick for proper cooking. Steaks cut from the ribs of the higher grades are tender and flavorful—compare well with other steaks. Plan to buy at least a pound for each two servings.

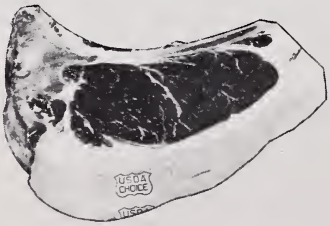
## BLADE CHUCK




BN-10345X

Generally an economical cut—higher grades can be oven roasted. In any grade, it makes an excellent, flavorful pot roast. A pound will make about 2 servings.

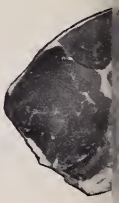
## CLUB STEAK




BN-10346X

This cut has no tenderloin, but otherwise is the same as porterhouse and can be used in the same way. It usually sells for a little less than porterhouse or T-bone. Excellent for individual servings.

## RUMI



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## PORTERH

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## SIRLC

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# TO USE?

## )AST

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BN-10347X

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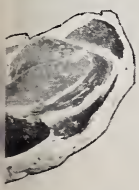
## STEAK



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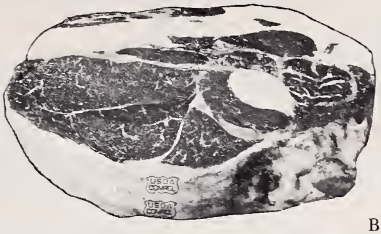
## ROUND-BONE CHUCK (Shoulder Arm)



BN-10349X

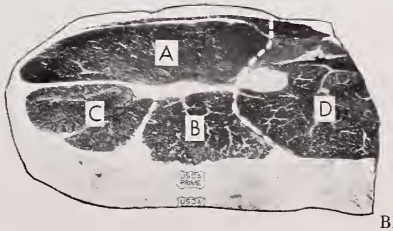
This meaty cut has excellent flavor, but lower grades must be braised or pot roasted to produce a juicy, tender roast. Higher grades may be roasted. It has very little bone and a pound should serve 2 to 3 people. This cut resembles the round in appearance (compare illustrations) but is not as tender.

## T-BONE STEAK

BN-10343X

Same as porterhouse, but with a smaller amount of tenderloin—can be used in same fashion. Allow nearly a pound per person.

## ROUND STEAK



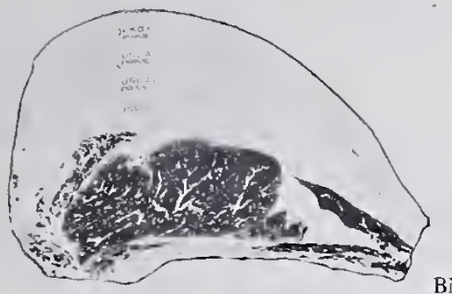

BN-10350X

An economical steak, with little waste, but not as tender as the other steaks. Can be divided as indicated. One pound makes about 3 servings. Prime, Choice, and Good eye and top round can be broiled. Lower grades of top round and the bottom round in any grade make excellent Swiss steaks.

(a) Top Round (b) Bottom Round
(c) Eye of Round (d) Tip

# WHAT CUT TO USE?

## RIB ROAST



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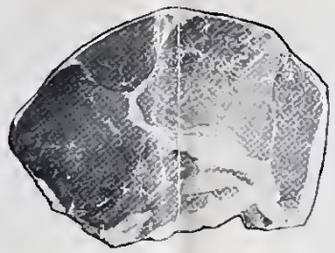
Unexcelled for tenderness and flavor, rib roast is easily carved and served. Rib roasts should be at least two ribs thick for proper cooking. Steaks cut from the ribs of the higher grades are tender and flavorful—compare well with other steaks. Plan to buy at least a pound for each two servings.

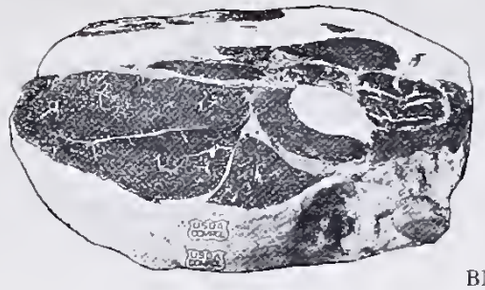
## RUMP ROAST



BN-10342X

Rump roast rivals the rib in flavor but is not quite as tender. For easier carving, this roast can be boned and rolled. A pound should serve about 2 people. In the Prime, Choice, and Good grades, this cut may be roasted.

## ROUND-BONE CHUCK (Shoulder Arm)



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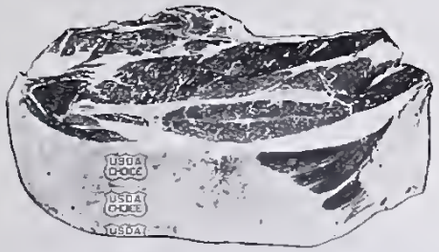
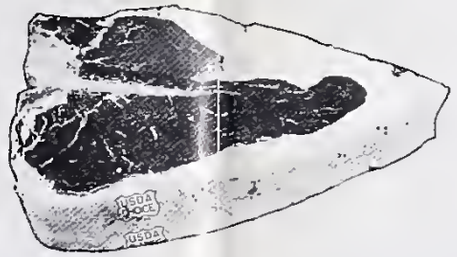
## BLADE CHUCK



BN-10345X

Generally an economical cut—higher grades can be oven roasted. In any grade, it makes an excellent, flavorful pot roast. A pound will make about 2 servings.

## PORTERHOUSE STEAK



BN-10347X

The best, but most expensive, steak—this is the one for special occasions. For such occasions you'll need nearly a pound per person. The tenderloin portion can be removed and served as filet mignon.

## T-BONE STEAK

BN-10343X

Same as porterhouse, but with a smaller amount of tenderloin—can be used in same fashion. Allow nearly a pound per person.

## CLUB STEAK

BN-10346X

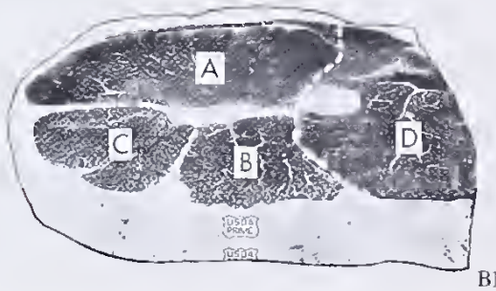
This cut has no tenderloin, but otherwise is the same as porterhouse and can be used in the same way. It usually sells for a little less than porterhouse or T-bone. Excellent for individual servings.

## SIRLOIN STEAK

BN-10348X

More variable in tenderness but generally cheaper than steaks listed above. Sirloins also vary in bone content—it pays to look for one with a small amount of bone. A good party steak, a full-cut thick sirloin will serve 5 to 6 people. You will get one to two servings per pound.

## ROUND STEAK

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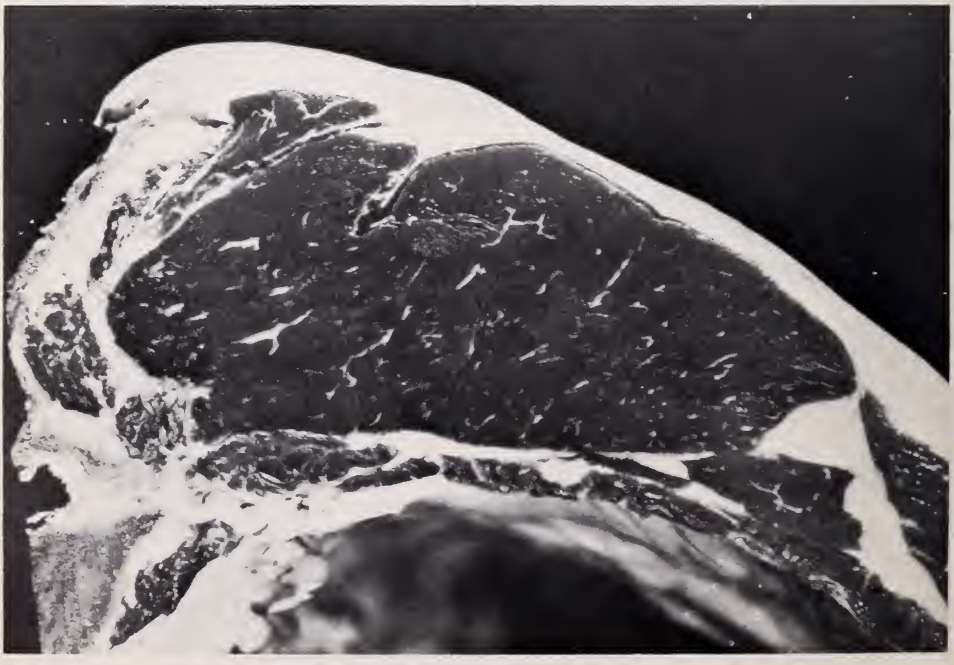
(a) Top Round (b) Bottom Round
(c) Eye of Round (d) Tip

USDA GOOD

# GOOD

This grade pleases thrifty consumers who seek beef with little fat but with an acceptable degree of quality. Although cuts of this grade lack the juiciness generally associated with more marbling, their relative tenderness and high proportion of lean to fat make them the preference of many people.

BN-10353X



# STANDARD

Standard grade beef has a very thin covering of fat and appeals to consumers whose primary concern is a high proportion of lean. When properly prepared, such beef is usually relatively tender. It is mild in flavor and lacks the juiciness usually found in beef with more marbling.

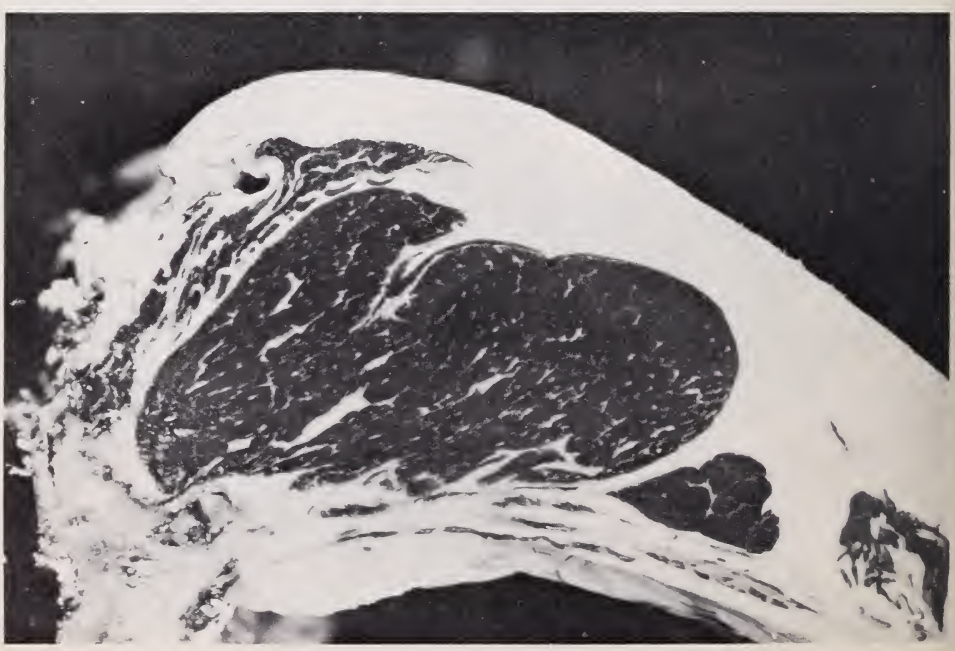
BN-10352X

USDA COMRCL

# COMMERCIAL

Beef that is graded Commercial is produced from older cattle and usually lacks the tenderness of the higher grades. Cuts from this grade, if properly prepared, can be made into satisfactory and economical meat dishes. Most cuts require long slow cooking with moist heat to make them tender and to develop the rich, full, beef flavor characteristic of mature beef.

BN-10355X



# OTHER GRADES

There are three other grades of beef—Utility, Cutter, and Canner. Utility is produced mostly from cattle somewhat advanced in age and is seldom sold as fresh beef. Cutter and Canner are used, ordinarily, in processed meat products and rarely, if ever, sold in retail stores.

## BEEF CHART

### Wholesale and Retail Cuts

Numerals in circles ○ refer to wholesale cuts and major subdivisions of such cuts. Letters refer to retail cuts.

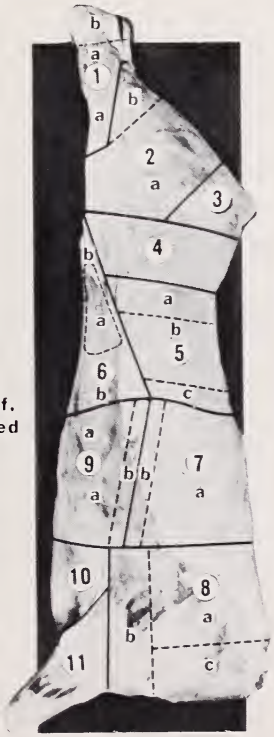
**① HIND SHANK**
a. Soup bones
b. Hock

**⑥ FLANK**
a. Flank steak
b. Stew or ground beef

**⑨ PLATE**
a. Stew, ground beef, or boned and rolled pot roasts
b. Short ribs

**⑩ BRISKET**
Stew or boned and rolled pot roasts

**⑪ FORE SHANK.**
Soup bones or ground beef




**② ROUND**
a. Round steaks or roasts
b. Pot roast

**③ RUMP**
Roasts or steaks

**④ LOIN END**
Sirloin steaks or roasts

**⑤ SHORT LOIN**
a. Porterhouse steaks
b. T-bone steaks
c. Club or Delmonico steaks

**⑦ RIB**
a. Rib roasts or steaks
b. Short ribs

**⑧ CHUCK**
a. Chuck rib roasts or steaks
b. Arm pot roasts or steaks
c. Stew or ground beef

### YIELDS OF WHOLESALE CUTS AND SUBDIVISIONS

Percentage of Carcass Weight

| | |
|---|---|
| ① to ⑥ HINDQUARTER | 48.0% |
| ① to ③ Round and Rump | 24.0% |
| ① Hind shank | 4.0% |
| ② Buttock | 15.5 |
| ③ Rump | 4.5 |
| ④ and ⑤ Full loin inc. suet. | 20.5 |
| ④ Loin end | 9.0 |
| ⑤ Short loin | 8.0 |
| Kidney knob | 3.5 |
| ⑥ Flank | 3.5 |

| | |
|---|---|
| ⑦ to ⑪ FOREQUARTER | 52.0% |
| ⑦ Rib | 9.5% |
| ⑧ Chuck | 24.5 |
| ⑨ Plate | 8.0 |
| ⑩ Brisket | 6.0 |
| ⑪ Fore shank | 4.0 |

## SUGGESTED COOKING GUIDE [1]

The use of an appropriate method of cooking is essential to bring out the desirable eating qualities of the specific cut and grade selected. Below is a guide suggesting the most generally accepted method of cooking retail cuts of beef of each grade.

Flank, plate, brisket, foreshank, and the heel of the round should be prepared in the same manner for all grades of beef. These less tender cuts are used for stewing, braising, pot roasting, or boiling, or are ground for use in meat loaves and similar dishes.

| Cut | Prime | Choice | Good | Standard | Commercial | Utility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Top round and sirloin tip (steaks and roasts). | Braise, broil, pan fry, pot roast, or roast. | Braise, broil, pan fry, pot roast, or roast. | Braise, pan fry, pot roast, or roast. | Braise, pan fry, or pot roast. | Braise or pot roast. | Braise or pot roast. |
| Bottom round (steaks and roasts). | Braise, pan fry, pot roast, or roast. | Braise, pan fry, pot roast, or roast. | Braise, pot roast, or roast. | Braise or pot roast. | Braise or pot roast. | Braise or pot roast. |
| Rump roast | Roast or pot roast. | Roast or pot roast. | Roast or pot roast. | Pot roast | Pot roast | Pot roast. |
| Sirloin (steaks and roasts). | Broil, pan fry, or roast. | Broil, pan fry, or roast. | Broil, pan fry, or roast. | Broil, braise, pan fry, or pot roast. | Braise or pot roast. | Braise or pot roast. |
| Porterhouse, T-bone, club and rib steaks. | Broil | Broil | Broil | Broil, pan fry, or braise. | Pan fry or braise. | Braise. |
| Rib roast | Roast | Roast | Roast | Roast or pot roast. | Pot roast | Pot roast. |
| Chuck, round bone and blade (roasts and steaks). | Roast, pot roast, or braise. | Roast, pot roast, or braise. | Roast, pot roast, or braise. | Pot roast or braise. | Pot roast or braise. | Pot roast or braise. |

[1] For recommended cooking procedures see "Family Fare," Home and Garden Bulletin No. 1, Revised 1960.

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